

“The Asian 21st Century” by Kishore Mahbubani

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In the book, “The Asian 21st Century” Kishore Mahbubani presents an examination of the changing global order, especially concerning the emergence of Asian countries like India and China. He believes that the West has to change its strategic aims and seek constructive engagement with these countries rather than raising them as threats. He highlights the need for ethical leadership and reforms, which can see India in this case, as a country which has the capacity to maintain equilibrium in the multipolar world. The purpose of this review is to evaluate his views on the US-China relations, the global order and the morals of politics. The 21st century will mark the end of the era of Western domination. The major strategic error that the West is making is to refuse to accept this reality. The West needs to learn how to act strategically in a world where they are no longer the number 1. (quoted, p. 15) The Biden Administration is in a crucial moment on how to deal with China concerning the Trump friendly policy heroically shift. Trump focused on representing China as a threat due to their expansionism but this only boxed the United States back without any setback for China even from the economic angles where the market of china shifted from \$ 1.8 trillion in 2009 to about \$5.5 trillion by 2019. (p. 45) Biden must incorporate a strategy that is active for a while, stops all the hostility that has blanketed the states and strains over understanding the walls of china and its potential rather than the containment attitude, which may no longer make sense because of china’s economics which all other countries depend on. (p. 47) The presidents of the United States are relevant in global affairs because of their personal qualities and policies. The presidency of Biden tends to promote a sense of politeness and giving, a sharp contrast to the presidency of Trump, which was marked by division. Where the nation is all but united and is therefore polarized, Biden has room to stock domestic section cuts and turn towards outward problems. He advocates peaceful leadership and policies restoring the presence of America in the arena (Doha agreement with Taliban, Aug 2021) and inspiring the entire planet in these confusing times by focusing on and addressing the main issues like COVID and economic inequalities with China (p. 39) The “India Way” is an intriguing version of moral leadership in the context of US-Chinese tensions. Dr. S. Jaishankar expects India to play a role of a moral center in that the country’s integrity stands in contrast to the navel gazing of America, the internal challenges of the European Union and the suspicions of China. He also draws on the Indian idea, Mahabharata to explain that the Indian principles and practice of multilateralism make India well-placed to lead the call for global unity, much in the spirit of Gandhi. With a society that is increasingly in need of moral compass, if India politically rises, it is likely to change the paradigms of acceptability in leadership. (p. 99) With the upcoming Asian Century, India stands between three options – firstly, to go along with the U.S. and the Quad, secondly, to get fully involved in the Asian trade setup or thirdly, to function as a single entity. Going with the U.S. is likely to provide an extra edge in matters

of security alongside China, but this is bound to come at a great cost of independence. (p. 103) On the other hand, India could also aim at remaining as an extreme neutral power which in turn becomes a power effective in promoting multilateral relations and managing conflicts. In the final analysis, India's ability to rise as a super power is determined largely by its IT, economic power, strategic intelligence and ethical influence attained. Moreover, India had \$40 billion that's why India was in Non alignment moment (NAM) during cold war. In addition, from its former status, India has enormous power that it has the capacity of outpacing China in the economy. Such measures account for it the potential to apprehend the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), enhance regional integration and grow foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows by reducing red tape (obstacles). India can realize its full economic aspirations by observing the successful transformation of other Southeast Asian countries and it can, therefore, provide the largest economy in the world for the best interest of its citizenry and elevate its status among nations. The West cannot continue with the same strategic mindset towards Asia, especially with China getting stronger. Mahbubani states that the earlier arrogance brought about many lies regarding the return of Asia. Rather than seeing China as an enemy, the time for the West to call for a massive strategic revision is now. To this end, Mahbubani supports a "three-m" strategy: Minimalist foreign policy, Multilateral institution building and a Middle-ground position towards allies and enemies. Quiet diplomacy, especially with examples like Myanmar, aids in creating a more peaceful and collaborative atmosphere. (p. 1-4) The U.S. has to recover retake the mantle of leadership across the globe but cannot do so without allies. There are internal divisions within Biden's tenure and the so called 'China threat' is an impediment to foreign relations. Contributions especially from ASEAN are ideal as they help ensure the two nations do not compete in other areas of global health and security management. (p. 46) Presently, the center of gravity in global power structures is moving away from the West and coming to the East, due to the emerging powers in Asia. While this dominance has been non-violent, its eastward has raised significant worries in the West. (quoted, p. 124-125) The rise of China signifies a change in the global power relations such that the center of the world is now in Asia. This change, which is the result of improvement in the quality of life, however, raises red flags, especially, in the United States, which tends to see China as a danger. Yet, in contrast to past empires with expansionist ambitions, (p. 131) China's policies are not aimed at conquest, but rather at maintaining the status quo being perturbed by violent means military action. Recognizing this context is crucial in making sense of the competitive dynamics present with regard to China and also with respect to the possibility of cooperation instead of antagonism. Rather than embracing alarmist rhetoric about China, the United States must take steps towards building cordial relations with it, especially since this country will soon have the largest economy in the world. With the competitiveness of their economies and their politics – fuels ideological differences. (p. 126-127) Nevertheless, despite all the worries, China's strategic weapons have been held enviously restrained, as even aggression has been avoided. A warm cooperative embrace of both for global problems could achieve much for both these countries in the long run since hostilities are outmoded in the context of understanding China/ dismantling the China's regime. The formation of the Quad opposition to China, if it is ever realized, will be short-lived, as member states are bound to have conflicting national interests and

economic relations. This is because China is Australia's main trading partner. Also, India does not want to be too friendly with the U.S. while Pakistan is China-friendly. When it comes to Japan, complete integration with the United States and confrontation with China will be a process. It is likely that the military agenda of the Quad will be eclipsed by economic structures such as RCEP. (p. 139) As China once again takes the center stage of global affairs, the West needs to reconsider its stereotypes about the state. Such stereotypes include especially the aspects that the Communist Party of China is savage in nature and that economic development will automatically translate into the establishment of democracy. Viewed from another perspective, a good number of the citizens within the territories under CPA rule consider the party as a force for peace and stability. It is ineffective to talk of regime change in China or the West; rather it is a more realistic proposition to be constructively engaged with China and the rest of the World rather than to ignore its increasing importance. The process of globalization has brought a lot of positive changes to the society, however, it has its own problems mainly caused by the major errors committed by the US. Such errors include; ignoring the needs of the working-class people, dismantling the structures of the state and establishing a system of rule that only favour the classes. All these factors have resulted in uneven development, which calls for a re-engagement to economic globalization that is more equitable. The operations of the United Nations Organization and the World Health Organization are also facing frustrations that are heightened by the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic reforms are necessary. Reforming these bodies is critical to the effective management of the global order. It ensures that there is readiness for the next task while encouraging the sense of ownership across countries. (p. 6) In the end, the 'The Asian 21st Century' makes a strong case for the need for moral authority and revision of the strategic objectives of the West. His views on the ethics of the 'India Way' provide refreshing antidotes in today's all out global political politics. With the challenges such as climate change and economic relative deprivation remaining, cooperative alternatives are paramount. In this case, countries looking to the future without wars, conflicts, and aggressions, are likely to foster a fairer and more peaceful global order.

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